



When Workforce Goals Meet Corporate Strategy: Six Tips for Getting the Greatest Value from Alignment

A SumTotal Whitepaper

Successful goal alignment, as part of a unified approach to talent development, can help your company significantly enhance its competitive edge by accelerating time-to-market and increasing business agility — so that you can react faster to threats and seize opportunities in new markets.

In this paper, you'll find six critical tips for achieving and maintaining alignment between your employees and your business goals:

- Cascading goals to gain visibility into each organization's objectives
- Tracking what employees are working on
- Prioritizing only those activities that are strategically pertinent
- Assessing employee progress with business strategies in mind
- Keeping goals on track and evaluating progress
- Equipping your team to succeed through unified talent development

Introduction

In business, there is no substitute for talent—and no better way to achieve business goals than to develop your talent. Effective and unified talent development positions you better to address business imperatives, from changes in demographics and strategies, to corporate growth and globalization. In fact, your approach to talent development can make or break the success of your company's initiatives and objectives.

By further developing your existing workforce, you can not only maximize your resource investments but also improve your potential to drive business success. That's because well-developed employees become a productive workforce that is greater than the sum of its parts. Like a skilled sports team working together to win the game, a productive workforce knows its overall objectives—and each employee, as part of the team, plays a specific and important role in advancing toward the goal. The key is to ensure that all players are properly aligned, performing the right tasks, and focused on how they fit into the team's strategy at all times.

In this whitepaper, you'll find six critical tips for achieving and maintaining alignment between your employees and your business goals. Additionally, you'll learn how successful alignment, as part of a unified approach to talent



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development, can help you significantly enhance your competitive edge by accelerating your time-to-market and increasing your business agility—so you can react faster to threats and seize opportunities in new markets.

1. Make your business objectives clear and unified, from the top down.

While it may seem obvious, this step is often a major hang-up for companies—particularly when multiple departments or business units are involved. Ultimately, however, every business needs a unified organizational strategy, from the top office down to every desktop. Determine what this strategy is, and be sure that every group within the company knows and understands how it fits into the big picture.

A good way to ensure solid communication of company objectives is by implementing a talent development solution with a cascading goal structure. By cascading goals, you gain visibility into each organization's objectives, so you can quickly identify and eliminate any strategic silos to ensure all groups are on the same page. Cascading goals also enable you to continuously track goal status for every employee, so you can hold workers accountable during review cycles.

2. Point employees in the right direction.

Help your employees understand how their roles play into the company's ability to succeed. Remind workers that—like members of a football team, for example—each player must focus on doing their best on the on activities within their reach that effectively push the ball closer to the end zone. Again, with the help of a solution that presents cascading goals, you can track what employees are working on and prioritize activities by level of importance. This step helps ensure that workers know where to focus so that they are always contributing effectively on corporate strategies.

3. Don't forget to course-correct.

Everyone can relate to times when coworkers were heads down on a project that had no real purpose. But in rough economic times, no organization can afford to squander resources on busywork. Every effort expended by your workforce should be purposeful and tied to corporate goals. Prioritize only those activities that are strategically pertinent, and ensure that non-strategic activities don't creep into the picture. If employees do become sidetracked, refer to cascading goals to pinpoint the problem, and refocus efforts toward tasks that are higher in priority.

4. Assess employee progress with business strategies in mind.

By the time performance reviews come around, employees should know how their positions mesh with overall company goals. They know which tasks rank highest in priority. Now it's time to hold them accountable—but this is only possible if you can integrate an employee's goals and status into the appraisal process. With the right talent development solution in play, you

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can be sure that employees set goals that are SMART (specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and timely), which makes it easier to objectively gauge how progress maps to business strategy. You can also evaluate employee performance more carefully on the activities you have deemed most important. Additionally, you can make goals—and the status of each goal—transparent to others in the organization, giving workers added incentive to stay on target and perform well.

5. Keep goals on track.

No strategy is set in stone, which makes the goal setting process a dynamic endeavor. Consider yourself a coach on the sidelines, continuously referring to playbooks and constantly re-evaluating strategies and players or making adjustments at halftime. Set goals, and execute on them—but be sure to evaluate those goals year-round, not solely during performance reviews. The more you monitor individual objectives, the greater the likelihood that they will be on target and fulfilled.

6. Equip your team to succeed through unified talent development.

When you align business, organizational, and employee goals, you can also give workers development plans that map to those goals and help further their progress. If they lack development plans, they might have accurate goals—but they could be ill-equipped to meet them. On the other hand, with a clear path for growth and the ability to self-select personal career development tracks, employees feel empowered and engaged. Add to this the ability to align, understand, set, and assess objectives, and you have a recipe for massive productivity.

The best way to provide your employees with the skills and knowledge they need is through a unified approach to talent development—one that includes all the vital elements involved, from learning and performance to compensation, succession, content creation, collaboration, and mobile management applications. A unified talent development solution links all these elements so you can easily identify capability gaps and train employees on the competencies they need to meet their goals. You can also leverage a cohesive view across all the facets of talent development to evaluate employee skills and ensure that the right people are working in the right roles toward the right goals, every day. Succeed here, and you are well-positioned to combat competitors by speeding time-to-market, or by leveraging your efficiency to expand into new territories.

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Conclusion

Your workforce is, in many ways, a team on a mission—much like any major sports team today. Each employee has a position to play in order to help the team succeed. If workers fail to perform the tasks associated with that position, they let the team down and deter progress substantially. And the only way to effectively situate and focus your players is to strategically align them with the ultimate objectives of your company.

Alignment is just the beginning, however. Obtaining long-term value from your employees involves a unified approach to talent development, where you integrate learning, performance, and compensation management to drive business results on a daily basis. This unified approach enables you to go beyond alignment to develop, engage, and retain your workforce, so you get the most from your investment in your greatest asset—your employees.

More Information

For more information, send an email to connect@sumtotalsystems.com

About SumTotal

SumTotal Systems, Inc. is the global leader in complete learning and talent management software that enables organizations to more effectively drive business strategy and growth. Recognized by industry analysts as the most comprehensive solution, SumTotal provides full employee lifecycle management, including a core system of record, from a single provider for improved business intelligence. The company offers customers of all sizes and in all industries the most flexibility and choice with multiple purchase, configuration, and deployment options. We have increased the performance of the world's largest organizations including Sony Electronics (NYSE: SNE), AstraZeneca (NYSE: AZN [ADR]; London: AZN), Amway, GKN (London: GKN), and Seagate (NYSE: STX).

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